

Special Events

Indiana Department of Homeland Security

Interagency Press Release Bank



Special Events

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Halloween Safety Tips

Halloween is a very unique and fun holiday for children. Safety needs to be the number one priority when it comes to October 31. To help parents and children have a safe and fun Halloween, the Indiana State Police offers the following safety tips:

The costume:

- Keep costumes short to prevent trips and falls.
- Try makeup instead of a mask. Masks often obstruct a child's vision and make tasks like crossing the street and going up and down stairs dangerous.
- Make sure children wear light colors or put reflective tape on their costumes.
- Remember to dress appropriately for the weather. Halloweens can be very cold or relatively warm.

Trick or treating:

- Make sure older children trick-or-treat with friends. Together, map out a safe route so parents know where they will be.
- Instruct children to stop only at familiar homes where the outside lights are on.
- Encourage children to trick-or-treat while it is still light out. If children are out after dark, make sure they have flashlights and travel on well lighted streets.
- Remind children not to enter the homes or cars of strangers.
- Walk on sidewalks rather than streets and be sure to look both ways before crossing the street and remember to cross at corners.
- Follow your community's trick-or-treating hours.
- Consider alternatives to traditional trick-or-treating. Many communities, schools, and churches offer child safe alternatives designed to keep children safely within parents' view. Some hospitals and schools allow children to trick-or-treat by going from room to room virtually eliminating the danger associated with walking on the street at after dark.

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Treats:

- Remind children not to eat any of their treats until they get home.
- Check out all treats at home in a well-lighted place.
- Only eat unopened candies and other treats that are in original wrappers. Remember to inspect fruits for anything suspicious.

Pool and Beach Safety

Summertime weather gets hot and beaches and pools are popular places to be. Families can have a great time playing in the water, but to ensure a fantastic, safe time it is important to understand water safety. Talk to your children about their safety by reminding them of these simple, safety steps:

- Swim in a supervised, marked area only when a lifeguard is present, and swim with others. Never swim alone.
- Enter the water feet first. Enter the water headfirst only when the area is clearly marked for diving and has no obstructions.
- Adults should never leave a child unobserved around water. Practice “reach supervision” by staying within an arm’s length of young children and weak swimmers while they are in and around the pool, lake or ocean.
- Take frequent breaks (about once an hour) where everyone gets out of the water, drinks water, reapplies sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher) and rests.
- Watch out for the “dangerous toos”: too tired, too cold, too far from safety, too much sun, too much strenuous activity.
- Post CPR instructions and directions to call 9-1-1 or your local emergency number in the pool area.
- Keep toys away from the pool when it is not in use. Toys can attract young children into the pool.
- If a child is missing, check the pool first. Go to the edge of the pool and scan the entire pool, bottom, and surface, and then the surround pool area.

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- \If you are caught in an ocean rip current, swim parallel to the shore until you are out of the current. Once you are free, turn and swim toward shore. If you cannot swim to the shore, float or tread water until you are free of the rip current and then head toward shore.

Amusement Ride Safety

As the Indiana weather becomes more favorable with its warm weather and sunshine, Hoosier families begin to take more trips to local amusement parks. Before going to an amusement park, discuss with your friends and family amusement safety tips to prevent accidents and to avoid injuries. Amusement rides can be fun, exciting and safe when you follow these tips.

- Read posted rules and follow all height/age restrictions and verbal instructions issued by the ride operators. Remember to read and explain all the posted rules to your children before allowing them to ride.
- Keep all body parts (hands, arms, legs) inside the ride at all times. You should wear long hair tied back.
- Always use the safety equipment provided, such as seat belts, shoulder harnesses, lap bars, etc. If you believe a device is not working correctly or properly positioned, please ask your nearest ride operator for assistance.
- Remain in the ride until it comes to a complete stop and until you are told you may exit.
- Stop riding before you get excessively tired to avoid injuries or illnesses.
- Do not board a ride if you see broken parts, signs of improper maintenance or an inattentive operator. Follow your instincts; if something about a ride seems suspicious, do not ride it.
- Drink plenty of water while visiting an amusement facility, especially on a hot day. Wear comfortable clothing and shoes, take frequent breaks and check up on each other.
- Know your physical conditions and limitations. If you suspect that your health could be at risk for any reason, or you could aggravate a pre-existing condition of any kind by riding a ride and/or device, do not ride!

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Fireworks Laws and Safety Tips

The Fourth of July holiday can bring Hoosiers together for a lot of fun, but can also bring injuries and property damage. Remember your Indiana fireworks laws and some safety tips to ensure a safe and worry-free holiday.

State firework laws say:

- Only individuals 18 years of age or older may purchase fireworks.
- In general, on Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day and New Year's Eve, fireworks may be discharged from 9 a.m. to midnight. Any other day of the year, fireworks may be discharged from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m.
- Check with local officials about when you can discharge fireworks as local ordinances may further restrict usage.
- Fireworks may be discharged only on your property, the property of someone who has granted permission or at special discharge locations.
- The 5% public safety fee now assessed on the sale of fireworks funds the Indiana Disaster Relief Fund and the Indiana Firefighter Training System.
- Penalties are now in place for violation of Indiana's fireworks laws. Know the laws for your area and obey them!

Remember these fireworks safety tips:

- Never let children handle, play with or light any fireworks.
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place away from the reach of children.
- Always purchase your fireworks from reliable, licensed fireworks dealers.
- Use a clear, open area and keep your audience a safe distance from the shooting site.
- Do not alter any fireworks device or make your own fireworks.
- Only light one firework item at a time and never attempt to re-light or fix dud fireworks.
- Have a fire extinguisher, water supply, hose or bucket of water nearby.
- Be cautious when lighting fireworks during times of strong wind. Fireworks can be very unpredictable.

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- Never smoke while handling fireworks.
- Never aim, point or throw fireworks at another person.
- Use fireworks outdoors, never indoors.

Protect Yourself and Hoosier Forests by Following These Campfire Safety Tips

Campfires are the nation's leading cause of children's camping injuries, and the primary catalyst for damaging forest fires. Indiana State Fire Marshal, James Greeson warns "It is important that all fires are extinguished properly and there is parental supervision around fires for children of all ages."

Campfire building may be safely undertaken if you practice proper burning techniques and safety measures to protect yourself and Indiana forests.

Below are a few basic fire safety tips from the Fire Marshal's Office, a division of the Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS), and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

Prepare your fire site:

- Check the weather forecast. Weather fluctuations, such as sudden gusts of wind, could make debris burning spark a wildfire.
- At Indiana state parks, reservoirs and forest facilities, campfires are allowed only in designated areas, such as campfire rings and fire pits.
- A safe burning site will be far away from power lines, overhanging limbs, buildings, automobiles, equipment, rotten stumps, shrubs, dry grass and leaves. The fire will have a vertical clearance at least three times the height of the pile, as heat from the fire extends far past the actual flames that you see.
- The ground around the fire or burn site should be surrounded by gravel or mineral soil (dirt) for at least 10 feet in all directions. Keep the surrounding area watered down during the burn.

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- Keep the fire in a contained unit such as a burn barrel, BBQ unit, hibachi or a small pit with rocks around it. Building a fire directly on the ground can allow the fire to spread underground through root systems or decaying material.

Safely start the fire

- When building a fire, start with dry twigs and small sticks. Add larger sticks as the fire builds up. Put the largest pieces of wood on last, pointing them toward the center of the fire and gradually push them into the flames.
- Never use flammable liquids to ignite or keep your fire burning. This means avoid gasoline, diesel fuel, lighter fluid and other dangerous fuels.
- After lighting the fire do not discard the match until it is cold. Douse it with water to be sure.
- Keep campfires small and do not let them get out of hand. The suggested size is 2', X2', X2'.
- Stack extra firewood upwind and away from the fire.

Stay safe around fires:

- Do not allow children and pets near the campfire and never leave them unsupervised.
- Teach kids how to stop, drop and roll if their clothing catches fire. Have a fire extinguisher on hand for emergencies and teach children how to use it.
- Keep plenty of water nearby and have a shovel for throwing sand on the fire if it gets out of control.
- Never leave a campfire unattended. Even a small breeze could quickly cause the fire to spread. Remain with your fire until it is completely out.
- When extinguishing the fire, drown it with water. Make sure all embers, coals and sticks are wet. Move rocks, as there may be burning embers underneath. Stir the remains, add more water and stir again.
- If you do not have water, use dirt. Mix plenty of soil and sand with the embers. Continue adding and stirring until all material is cooled.
- Do not bury your coals, they can smolder and start to burn again.

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Protect Indiana trees:

- The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) is an insect responsible for killing 25 million ash trees in Indiana, Michigan and Ohio. You can help prevent the spread of invasive pathogens and insect species by using local firewood for campfires.
- All hardwood firewood from Ohio, Michigan, Illinois and EAB-quarantined counties in Indiana and Pennsylvania is banned from Indiana state parks, reservoirs and forest campgrounds. Banned firewood will be confiscated by gate attendants, so you should find out if your county is quarantined for EAB before you leave on your camping trip. Visit <http://www.in.gov/dnr/entomolo> and see the overview map of all quarantined sites in Indiana (Map accurate as of May 2009).
- Bundled firewood purchased at a commercial store that bears a USDA stamp or Indiana state label indicating the firewood vendor has a federal or state compliance agreement, can be brought into state facilities.
- Never leave unused firewood behind at the campfire site.

School Safety

- When driving, pay attention and scan the entire area around you.
- Look for kids playing near the street and slow down.
- Children are often unpredictable and unaware of danger around them.
- Slow down around children and other pedestrians.
- Watch for people about to step off the curb at crosswalks.
- Never let your child walk anywhere alone, whether to the store, to a friend's house or to the park.
- Never let your child play outside alone. Predators may cruise neighborhoods looking for unsupervised kids; take turns with other parents in your neighborhood or enlist a trustworthy family member to help.
- If your child rides bikes, roller blades or skateboards, make sure they are always with two buddies.

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- Report any suspicious strangers or vehicles in the neighborhood to police.
www.in.gov/dhs/getprepared.
- The end of the school year means more kids are out and about, especially in neighborhoods. Parents and caregivers play an essential role in keeping kids safe while enjoying summer activities.

Summer activity tips:

- Teach kids to appreciate and respect EMS professionals, firefighters and police officers, and when and how to dial 9-1-1 in an emergency.
- Always wear a helmet when biking, skateboarding, roller skating or riding a scooter.
- Always stop at STOP signs and look both ways before crossing the street.
- Use sunscreen and wear sunglasses to protect your skin and eyes from harmful solar rays.
- Use care when eating foods like hotdogs, grapes and hard candy or cut them into smaller pieces to prevent choking.
- Never allow unsupervised children to play near or swim in streams, pools, retention ponds or other bodies of water.

Online Holiday Shopping Safety

- Secure your computer. Make sure your computer has the latest security updates installed. Ensure that your anti-virus/anti-spyware software is running and, install a firewall before you begin your online shopping.
- Upgrade your Internet browser to the most recent version available. Review the browser's security settings. Apply the highest level of security available that still gives you the functionality you need.
- Create strong passwords for online accounts. Use at least eight characters, with numbers, special characters and upper and lower case letters. Don't use the same passwords for online shopping websites that you use for logging onto your home or work computer. Never share your login and/or password.
- Do not email sensitive data. Never email credit card or other financial/sensitive information. Email is like sending a postcard. Other people have the potential to read it.

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- Do not use public computers or public wireless for your online shopping. Public computers may contain malicious software that steals your credit card numbers and other confidential information.
- Review policies. Review the privacy policy for the website/merchant you are visiting. Know what information the merchant is collecting about you, how it will be used and if it will be shared or sold to others.
- Secure your transactions. Look for the "lock" icon on the browser's status bar and be sure "https" appears in the website's address bar before making an online purchase. The "s" stands for "secure" and indicates that the webpage is encrypted. Some browsers can be set to warn the user if they are submitting information that is not encrypted.
- Make payments securely. Pay by credit card rather than debit card. Credit/charge card transactions are protected by the Fair Credit Billing Act. Cardholders are typically only liable for the first \$50 in unauthorized charges. If online criminals obtain your debit card information they have the potential to empty your bank account.
- Use temporary account authorizations. Some credit card companies offer virtual or temporary credit card numbers. This service gives you a temporary account number for online transactions. These numbers are issued for a short period of time and cannot be used after that period. This is the safest method of shopping online.
- Select merchants carefully. Limit your online shopping to merchants you know and trust. Confirm the online seller's physical address and phone number in case you have questions or problems. If you have questions about a merchant check with the Better Business Bureau or the Federal Trade Commission.
- Keep a record of your online transactions, including the product description and price, the online receipt and copies of every email you send or receive from the seller. Review your credit card and bank statements for unauthorized charges.